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GOV. HENRY BULL
AND HIS DESCENDANTS

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Historical Magazine, July, 1884,
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GOV. HENRY BULL AND HIS DESCENDANTS.

R. John O. Austin, in his interesting contribution to the Genealogical Notes of the Newport Historical Magazine, Jan. 1884, vol. 4, p. 135, makes known the fact that Gov. Henry Bull married a second wife in Sandwich, Mass., in 1664, and draws the inference that Henry Bull, Jr. (son of the Governor, and father of the third Henry Bull, afterwards Attorney General of the colony) was a son of this second wife, and not of the first wife, as commonly supposed. This supposition would, as Mr. Austin remarks, remove the improbability of the common belief that Gov. Bull's two sons, Jireth and Henry, were born of the same wife twenty years apart; but it encounters still greater difficulties, as can easily be shown by a little attention to dates. As I have for some time suspected that this second son of the Governor *never in fact existed*, I will give my reasons for departing from the common account, sustained as it is by the high authority of the late Major Henry Bull in his family memoirs.

First, then, as to the date of the second marriage. Mr. Austin calls attention to the discrepancy between the date given for this by the Sandwich Records, "fourteenth day of 12th mo. 1664," and that of the first wife's death in the Portsmouth Records, "first day of the eighth month, 1665." Magazine, p. 134). One or the other of these dates is clearly wrong. Mr. Austin suspects the latter; but as he shows that Esther Allen, the second wife, was

born Dec. 8, 1648 (Mag. p. 135), and would therefore be just sixteen years old in Dec. 1664, it seems more probable that the mistake is in the latter date, and that the marriage took place in 1665 or 1666. Even then the bride was young enough to form a marked contrast to her husband, who was then about fifty-five or fifty-six years of age.

But, after all, the date is immaterial to the present inquiry, since no authority or even surmise, fixes the death of Elizabeth, the first wife, earlier than 1663. But Henry Bull, the father of the Attorney General, died in 1690, aged about 32 years, and must therefore have been born about 1658. If he was the son of Governor Bull he must have been also the first wife's son; indeed the second wife, Esther Allan, was, by Mr. Austin's own showing, only about ten years his senior. The age of Elizabeth Bull, the first wife, is nowhere given, so far as I know, but her son Jireth (afterward the famous Captain Bull of King's Province, or Narragansett) was born in 1637, and there is no trustworthy evidence that she ever had another child, unless this Henry Bull, Jr., or Henry Bull of *Kingston*, born about 1658, was such. This of course, is in the nature of things, possible, though improbable. The late Major Bull, in his family memoirs, states it as a fact, and undoubtedly believed him to be a younger son of the Governor; at the same time he expresses regret at having been able to learn so little of "this interesting member" of the family. Why did not the title which he himself gives him, Henry Bull of *Kingston*, lead him to suspect that he was a son of Jireth and not of Jireth's father? Why was he not struck with the curious fact that both the sons of Governor Bull should have left Newport in their father's life time, and while he was still an important and influential member of the community, and established themselves in the King's Province? From an examination of his original manuscript, I am inclined

to think that these questions did occur to him, and that at one time he supposed Henry to be the son of Jireth, but afterwards changed his mind, for reasons that must always remain buried, with so much else of valuable information as to the early history of Rhode Island, in his honored grave.

My reasons for supposing that his first impressions on this subject were correct, and that Jireth Bull was, in fact, the Governor's only son, are drawn in part from materials not known in Major Bull's lifetime. I will not attempt, however, to discriminate them here, but state as briefly as possible the facts that are now established, and then my inferences from them.

(1.) It is clearly proved by deeds and other family papers that Jireth Bull (son of Governor Bull, born 1637, died before 1685) had four sons, Jireth, *Henry*, Ephraim and Ezekiel, all living at their father's death, and when Jireth, Jr., by deed dated Dec. 6, 1685, released to his three brothers his interest in their father's lands in King's Province, "*provided that I or my heirs enjoy my Grandfather's, Henry Bull's Farme, after his decease, adjoining to my farme in Newport.*" I am not able, where I now am writing, to determine positively what was then the rule of inheritance to land in Rhode Island, but it is notable that this Jireth, Jr., as oldest son of an oldest (if not only) son, was the Governor's heir-at-law by the common law of England. The Governor, however, was still living.

Of these four sons of Jireth Bull, three—Jireth, Jr., Ezekiel and Ephraim—appear often in deeds, &c., after 1690, but Henry never after that date. Whether there is any positive record of, or reference to, his death, I cannot from recollection say; (viz., whether any that identifies him as *the son of Jireth*) but I am confident that there is no trace of him as living later than 1690.

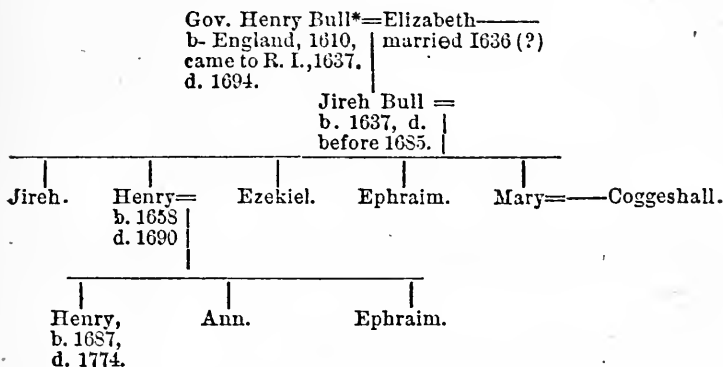
(2.) Henry Bull, *third* of the name, born 1687, died 1774, Attorney General of the colony in 1727, was one of the best known members of the family, and we have facts well established in regard to him from which we may reason safely. He was the son of *a* Henry Bull who died in 1690, aged about 32 years. He was brought up in Newport under the charge of an aunt, Mary Coggeshall, and in 1700 his mother, the widow (of Henry) Ann Bull, wrote from Kingston to this aunt about him a letter which is still preserved, and which is addressed to sister Coggeshall. This Mary (Bull) Coggeshall and her brother Henry appear in the modern genealogies as children of Governor Bull. That Henry was the Attorney General's father as above stated, is beyond all controversy. But I know of no direct proof that he was the son, rather than the grandson, of Governor Henry Bull; and so far as I know, there is no contemporary record, proof, or allusion of any kind showing the existence of such a son of Gov. Bull, except the mere inference that this father of the Attorney General was one. But when we compare dates, and notice the remarkable coincidence in every recorded fact handed down to us in relation to the two supposed lives, the more probable inference seems to be that the two are merely duplicates, and that Henry Bull, of Gov. Henry, is a mere myth, produced by severing the father of the Attorney General, from the son of Jireth, when both were, in fact, one and the same person.

(3.) The will of Governor Bull (d. Feb. 22, 1693-4) is unfortunately not extant, or it would no doubt have saved all controversy on this point. We have, however, the overseer's account of the estate, rendered in 1706. No child of the Governor is mentioned in it; the grandchildren named in one item as living are Jireth, Ezekiel, and Ephraim, and the children of *Henry*, dec'd. By another entry we learn that the *children* of Henry Bull of *Narra-*

gansett take one-fifth of the money in the overseer's hands, £31, while £124 is charged in one sum to Jireh, Ephraim, and Ezekiel Bull and Mary Coggeshall. It will be seen that these four take four-fifths, one-fifth each, while the children of Henry take one-fifth between them. We know from other sources that there were two, if not three, children of Henry then living. Had they been grandchildren of the Governor, by a son Henry, they would have taken among them one-half, while the children of Jireth above named would have taken the other half. The distribution actually made seems conclusive of the fact that the only Henry Bull known among the Governor's children or grandchildren was one of the latter class, and that his share was that of a grandchild, divided among his children, he himself being dead. It will be noticed also that this account fixes the position of Mary Coggeshall as a grandchild and not a daughter of the Governor. She must, therefore, have been the daughter either of Jireth or of (the mythical) Henry 2d; but if the latter, she would be sister to Henry, 3d, the Attorney General, whereas we know that she was his aunt.

The foregoing statement of the case has been made almost entirely from memory, at a distance of more than a thousand miles from all the original documents, and with only a few hasty memoranda of my own, made long ago, to refer to; still I believe it to be substantially correct. In a matter of this kind, conclusive proof is not easy. It is with great diffidence that I depart from the accepted belief in such a matter. The evidence is almost entirely circumstantial. One single, well authenticated fact, showing the existence of a son of Gov. Bull named Henry, would overthrow it all. But until such a fact appears, I cannot but think the singular coincidence of all the circumstances now known, warrants us in doubting it, and

in stating the genealogy in the shape in which, for greater clearness, I append it here :



*His 2d wife, probably Esther, mar. 1665-6. 3d wife, Ann, mar. 1677.

St. Louis, Mo. March 30, 1884.

W. G. H.

At the beginning and during the war of 1812, Capt. W. C. Greene, of Newport, commanded gunboat No. 48, which constituted a portion of our navy at that time. The following abstract from his log-book shows the date when the first capture of a British armed vessel was made, or rather when that captured vessel was brought into Newport :

"Newport, R. I., Monday, Dec. 7, 1812. Fresh breeze and flying clouds. At 2 P. M., arrived His Majesty's ship *Macedonian*, 38 guns, prize to the U. S. Ship *United States*."

The office of Attorney General for the colony of Rhode Island was created May, 1650, when William Dyre was elected to fill the office.

NEWPORT TOWN RECORDS.

CONTRIBUTED BY H. E. TURNER, M. D., NEWPORT, R. I.

Continued from page 257, No. 4, Vol. 4, Newport Historical Magazine.

BIRTHS.

May	13, 1709.	Wright, Elizabeth of John & Abigail
Jan.	17, 1712.	Abigail,
Dec.	23, 1715.	Gideon } twins.
		Tabitha }
Oct.	24, 1711.	Ward, Thomas of Richard and Mary
Dec.	—, 1713.	Mary?
Oct.	22, 1710.	Ammy
Feb.	19, 1715.	Elizabeth
Sept.	19, 1719.	Isabel
Sept.	24, 1721.	Hannah
Aug.	4, 1723.	John
Aug.	27, 1725.	Samuel,
June	8, 1727.	Mercy
April	14, 1729.	Margaret
—	—, 1730.	Richard?
Dec.	[27, 1732]?	Henry?
June	6, 1735.	Elizabeth,
March	1, 1712.	Weaver, Elizabeth of John and Alice
Oct.	3, 1713.	Thomas
March	1, 1716.	Julia

